

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAB-01

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P R 152030Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7459

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

S E C R E T MANAGUA 2725

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NUFOR, PFOR, NU

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER UNPERTURBED BY CANAL TREATY PROBLEMS

1. IN MEETING WITH LUIGI ENAUDI OF S/P AND EMOFFS JULY 11, FOREIGN MINISTER ALEJANDRO MONTIEL ARGUELLO DISPLAYED STUDIED UNCONCECN TOWARD POLITICAL PROBLEMS CURRENTLY PLAGUING PANAMA CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. ASKED BY ENAUDI TO COMMENT ON PANAMA, MONTIEL REPLIED BLANDLY THAT IT SEEMED TO BE A U.S. SENATE PROBLEM. AS FAR AS NICARAGUA WAS CONCERNED, HE SAID, IT WOULD NOT BE A BAD IDEA FOR THE U.S. TO HANG ON TO THE CANAL FOR AWHILE. ASKED WHETHER PANAMA WOULD BE A BETTER OR WORSE FRIEND DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, MONTIEL THOUGHT IT WOULD NOT MATTER MUCH. VICE MINISTER HARRY BODAN CHIMED IN THAT WITH A NEW TREATY UNDER THEIR BELTS, THE PANAMANIAN MIGHT HOPEFULLY TURN TO PROBLEMS OF INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, HE CAUTIONED, IF SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS AROSE, THE PANAMANIAN LEADERS WOULD NOT HESITATE TO COME BACK TO THE U.S. AND ASK EVEN MORE CONCESSIONS IN ORDER TO DISTRACT PUBLIC ATTENTION.

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2. MONTIEL WAS CURIOUS AS TO WHETHER THE US. WOULD CONTINUE

NEGOTIATING DESPITE CONGRESSIOONAL REACTION. EINAUDI ANSWERED YES, AND MONTIEL SHOOK HIS HEAD AND SAID "IT'S GOING TO BE VERY DIFFICULT ISN'T IT?". HE ASSERTED THAT THE DISPOSITION OF THE CANAL ZONE WAS RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT. ANY SIGNIFICANCE IT ONCE HAD IN TERMS OF THE DEFENSE OF THE CANAL OR OF THE REGION HAD BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS AND TECHNOLOGY. BUT THE CONTINUED SMOOTH AND UNINTERRUPTED MANAGEMENT OF THE CANAL HE STATED WAS INDEED A VITAL CONCERN OF NICARAGUA. BODAN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GON POSITION WAS A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO ARTICULATE SINCE ITS REAL NATIONAL INTERESTS WERE AT ODDS WITH THE EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF THE PANAMANIAN CASE AND THE IMPERATIVE OF LATIN SOLIDARITY.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS THE MOST EXPLICIT FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT OF NICARAGUAN PHILOSOPHY TOWARD THE CURRENT CANAL NEGOTIATIONS YET AND SEEMS TO REFLECT FULLY PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S CONCERN ABOUT THE U.S. CEDING TOO MUCH CONTROL OVER THE CANAL TO AN ERRATIC PANAMA. THIS APPROACH IS RELATIVELY INDIFFERENT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS ARISING FROM A STALEMATE

IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, A CONCERN INCIDENTALLY IMPLIED BY BODAN HIMSELF (ALBEIT PERHAPS INADVERTENTLY) TO POLOFF LESS THAN TWO WEEKS WHEN HE REACTED TO THE SNYDER AMENDMENT.
SHELTON

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NNN

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